

# Latrobe Valley Naturalist

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## VALE ELTIE 'ELSIE' COGGAN

17/08/24 - 4/01/13

Elsie was an active member of the LVFNC for over 25 years. Looking in our first 50 years history book Elsie appears in photos taken at the Club's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1985 and at the summer camp in 2005.

In 1993 she took over as the Club's Bird Recording Officer. For 13 years, until late in 2006, Elsie maintained the bird records and coordinated the activities of the Bird Group. In that time she also observed and recorded birds in a block at Lake Narracan sending the data into the Bird Atlas of Australia.

Elsie was also active in the Botany Group and I can remember meeting at her place to learn more about plants. She hosted our Program Planning meeting for many years.

Elsie was a good and caring friend to many in the Club. She enthused and assisted us to learn more about the birds and plants in our area. Her contributions to the Club are well remembered and we are thankful that we had the opportunity to know her.

We will remember a feisty, little lady who would point out that "it is not a Blue Wren; it is a Superb Fairy-wren".

*Alix Williams presented the above, on behalf of the Club, at Elsie's funeral. We gave Elsie's family a copy of "To Protect and Enjoy".*

## EXCURSION TO MT CANNIBAL

### Botany Group 13 October 2012

Despite the rain a good number of people has turned up to the excursion. We don't trust the sunny break and dress in wet weather gear. Wendy's brother joins us, but warned about our speed (or lack of thereof) he soon heads off on his own. By the time he returns from his walk we have progressed only a few 100 metres and still need to start the loop walk.

The reserve has two major weed infestations, *Pittosporum undulatum* and *Erica baccans*. The first one is more or less under control, but the last one is a never ending menace for the friends group. The Erica has been cultivated as a cut flower in the area and is still present in paddocks around the reserve. Introduced grasses are abundant in some places, but fortunately so are native grasses such as Wallaby Grass,

*Austrodanthonia* sp. and Wiry Speargrass, *Austrostipa muelleri*.

Wendy suggests compiling an official plant list and Jacky takes on the job of scribe. The diversity of the reserve is amazing and with help of the various experts in the group we are able to compile a list of over 100 native plants. The ongoing high rainfall has caused some of the plants to grow taller and more robust than usual and our identification skills are tested.

As in other areas in the Bunyip, there is a variety of Acacias. We identify a total of 9 species, including the less common *A. brownii*. With the rain clearing the Blue Stars, *Chamaescilla corymbosa* are opening up and showing us their bright colour. Early Nancies, *Wurmbea dioica* are abundant on the rocks near the top of the mountain. In May and June large numbers of the Mosquito Orchid, *Acianthus exsertus* can be found in the reserve. Today the Bird Orchid, *Chiloglottis valida* is the most common orchid. We also find small numbers of Tall Greenhood, *Pterostylis melagramma*, Pink Fingers, *Caladenia carnea*, Cinnamon Bells, *Gastrodia sesamoides* and Wallflower Orchid, *Diuris orientis*. In denser forest at the top of the mountain we find a completely yellow *Diuris* which does not fit any picture or description in the Field guide to Orchids of NSW and Victoria (Tony Bishop). Hopefully one of the orchid experts in the club can help with the identification at the later date.

Other plants worth mentioning are:

|                                     |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Acrotriche prostrata</i>         | Trailing Groundberry |
| <i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i>     | Black Sheoke         |
| <i>Asperula conferta</i>            | Common Woodruff      |
| <i>Bossiaea prostrata</i>           | Creeping Bossiaea    |
| <i>Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia</i> | Green Rock Fern      |
| <i>Eucalyptus globoidea</i>         | White Stringybark    |
| <i>Isopogon ceratophyllus</i>       | Horny Cone-bush      |
| <i>Lomatia ilicifolia</i>           | Holly Lomatia        |
| <i>Olearia ramulosa</i>             | Twiggy Daisy-bush    |
| <i>Pimelea linifolia</i>            | Slender Rice-flower  |
| <i>Spyridium parvifolium</i>        | Dusty Miller         |

By the time we reach the top of the mountain the sun is out and we sit on the granite boulders to have lunch and to catch the warmth of the sun like lizards. We enjoy the views and the birds. A Yellow Faced Honeyeater is flitting close by and a Grey



Shrike-thrush is giving a concert in the trees. We complete the second leg of the walk a lot faster. We are descending and there is less variety along this part of the track. We arrive back at the car park at afternoon tea time.

A full list of plants can be obtained from Wendy Savage.

Marja Bouman

## GRAPTOLITES AT BENDIGO

One of the excursion options at the Bendigo SEANA Camp in August was a visit to a graptolite locality. If you are thinking “What!?”, graptolites small fossil marine animals which appeared about 545 mya (million years ago) during the Cambrian Period and died out 360 mya during the Devonian Period. The word ‘graptolite’ means ‘writing on rocks’. Richard Fortey (1) has described them as ‘a hacksaw blade, a thin blade a millimetre or so wide and a few centimetres long, carrying series of saw-toothed indentations along one side.’ Actually not all graptolites are thin, saw-toothed blades, but can look like chicken wishbones (*Didymograptus* species) with the indentations on the outside edge or flattened leaf-like blades with indentation on the ‘leaf’ edge (*Phyllograptus* species).

At the locality not far from the Camp headquarters, we rummaged around in a heap of small pieces of shale which resembled small paving stones. Six species of graptolites have been found at this locality (including the two mentioned above) and the five of us on the excursion found four of them. The rocks are of Ordovician age (505 – 438 mya).

It is only in relatively recent times (1980s) that the nature of these little animals has been discovered. The indentations turned out to be tubes presumably with a polyp inside (discovered by the aforementioned Professor Fortey) and the structure of the tube turned out to be not like the colonial bryozoans or hydroids, but akin to another living colonial organism, *Rhabdopleura*, which is a Hemichordate. So graptolites are on the same evolutionary line as animals with backbones, including us.

Because graptolites were planktonic (they have been found in rock strata known to be deep sea environment of deposition), the same species is often found in different

places across the world. They evolved quickly and it was realised in the late 1800s that a sequence of rocks could show what order species appeared in and that this could be used to correlate sequences across the world. Graptolites became, and still are the basis of relative dating particularly for the Ordovician and Silurian (435- 405 mya) periods and for the Lower Palaeozoic in general. Radioactive dating on volcanic rocks interleaved with sedimentary rocks give us the age range of a sequence of sedimentary rocks in which the graptolite species occur. By comparing graptolite species in rocks from around the world it is possible in some cases to date the age of rocks to within 1 million years.

1. Fortey, Richard. Life: *An Unauthorised Biography*, HarperCollins, London 1997

Jackie Tims

## SUBS FOR 2013-4 NOW DUE

Please note increase – see inside back cover for full details

## DIURIS punctata COUNT 2012

Members of Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists Club who attended on either day included Bruce and Estelle Adams, Ken Harris, David Mules, Ron Carey, Phil Rayment, Wendy Savage, Andrew and Brian Green, and Jenny Porter with a friend. We started at Dawson with only 4 members, but as we finished the South site, 4 helpers arrived and we were also visited by two DSE staff.

For the larger count at Longford Road, I again invited Malcolm Grant to bring his TAFE Environmental Management course to help and this time his party provided 12 counters, which added to 6 Field Naturalists, gave us 18 bodies to perform the count. We were again much more efficient at Longford with two teams working in parallel and completed the count in good time. Thank you to all who helped us carry out these valuable surveys.

Dates: Dawson 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012  
Longford 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012

### DAWSON

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| South Side                  | 338 |
| + just outside marked areas | 15  |
| North Side                  | 242 |



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|   |      |
|---|------|
| + outside marked areas                      | 77   |
| Addl patch on Sth side opp Nthn patch       | 11   |
| Total for Dawson                            | 683  |
| <b>LONGFORD</b>                             |      |
| Sth/West end of Tanjil Rd to 17km sign      | 991  |
| North side of Tanjil Rd to 17km sign        | 56   |
| beyond 17km sign South side                 | 220  |
| Area between notices (South side)           | 215  |
| North side of road between markers          | 813  |
| Tanjil Road total                           | 2295 |
| Eastern Area from Chessum Road              |      |
| South Side to second pole                   | 31   |
| South Side past second pole                 | 301  |
| South Side beyond third pole                | 204  |
| Fenced area on north side of road           | 18   |
| just outside fenced area (adjacent to road) | 5    |
| beyond west end of area                     | 31   |
| Chessum Road total                          | 590  |
| Total for Longford Road                     | 2885 |

Dawson this year at last showed signs that the drought had finally ended. The vegetation generally was much lusher. David scanned the first patch with binoculars and raised our hopes by reporting huge numbers of orchids. He proved optimistic as he was seeing large numbers of Chocolate lilies. Although not as numerous as the Chocolate Lilies, we did however find a big increase in the orchids. 338 plants was a nearly 6-fold increase on the mere 57 plants in 2011 and the highest total since 2004. The northern site continued the positive trend, although 242 plants was only a 3-fold increase on the previous year's 71. In addition, a small extra patch was discovered across the rail trail from the northern parch, containing 11 orchid plants. The adjacent patch of *Diuris sulphurea* outside the northern plot has also increased to 105 plants, with now 10 plants inside the northern marked area. It remains important to watch out for *Diuris sulphurea*, because plants in early bud can be confused with *D. punctata* plants.

The Longford Road count, a week later, gave a very different picture. Whereas Dawson has made a big improvement, the Longford count, which has been exceptionally high for the last 3 years has plummeted. The counts for the last four years (including this year) are -

|      |       |      |      |
|------|-------|------|------|
| 2009 | 7619  | 2011 | 8242 |
| 2010 | 11101 | 2012 | 2880 |

At Tanjil Road, the count was 2295 compared with 5170 in 2011. The reduction at Chessum Road was even worse, from 590 compared with 3072 the previous year. It is interesting to note that both patches seem to be moving (and in opposite directions). The Tanjil Road patch, each year reaches further to the West, this year 220 plants were beyond the previous counted area. At Chessum Road there is a major extension of the patch to the East on the South side of the road. Of 590 plants counted 301 were between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> power poles. The 2<sup>nd</sup> pole was once the limit for the patch. A further 204 plants were found beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> power pole.

At the Chessum Road site there had been extensive slashing of the Burgan inside the fenced area, and it was possible that this caused a set back to the orchids in that area. This is countered by the fact that the area of greatest extension containing 504 plants, had also been slashed at the same time. There had been no recent slashing at the Tanjil Road site.

Looking at the overall figures for Longford Road, which now extend from 1993 to 2012, it seems that the highest counts have occurred in -

1998 6,700; 2004 15,711; 2010 11,101

with much lower totals in the intermediate years. There is a suggestion here of a 6 year cycle in the orchid abundance at Longford. It will be interesting to see if this pattern continues.

Ken Harris

## VALE DOROTHY MAHLER

Dorothy Mahler, a long-standing member of FNC of Victoria, passed away on 12 December 2012. Although not directly associated with this club, many of us who have participated in VFNCA/SEANA camps will happily recall her contributions to many enjoyable excursions.

## REPORT ON BUSINESS MEETING HELD 19.11.2012

### General Meetings & Excursions

**Friday 22 February 2013:** Marine Research – Mallacoota to Portland with FNCV – Margaret Rowe.



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**Saturday 23 February 2013:** Ellen Lyndon Park, Leongatha and rockpooling at Inverloch. Meet **12 noon** EL Park for guided walk and lunch. Full details see page 5.

**Friday 22 March: AGM.** Fossil Megafauna of SE Australia – Mike Cleeland

**Saturday 23 March:** Related excursion to Cape Liptrap. Meet 11am at Bunurong Environment Centre, Inverloch for introductory talk, then lunch, then drive to Tarwin to field site for 2pm low tide.

**Botany Group:** Saturday 2 March – salt marsh plants at Tooradin foreshore 10am, Jenny Rejske to lead. Entering Tooradin on Sth Gippsland Hwy, foreshore is signposted to the left before crossing the bridge. Contact: Wendy Savage ☎ 5634 2246

**Bird Group:** Tuesday 5 March Mathison Park, then Kerry Rd Morwell NP. Meet by 8.30 Mackeys Rd carpark, northern end of Lake Hyland, Churchill. Contact: Alix Williams ☎ 5127 3393, [alixw@spin.net.au](mailto:alixw@spin.net.au)

**Finance** – Balances: Cash Mgt Trading A/c \$2924.19. Term Deposit \$13,327.00. Naturalist printing has been increased to \$121 per month. Treasurer recommends increasing membership fees by \$5. Motion: that subscription costs for 2013 be: Family \$55, Single \$40, Junior/student \$25 (unchanged), Naturalist \$25. D Mules/K Harris. Motion passed.

## **Business Arising, Correspondence & General Business**

Program for 2013 is complete, will be distributed at Christmas party and posted in Jan/Feb Naturalist.

Dept of Justice – re legal changes affecting incorporated associations. Alix will peruse further but does not think it will affect our organization.

Summer Camp to Dargo Friday 18 to Monday 21 January – *this was cancelled due to bushfire danger.*

Wildflower Walk in Baw Baw NP (Mt St Gwinear) 12 January 2013 – walks for varying levels of fitness.

Naturalists from Catherine Eldridge, daughter of Ken Eldridge, from 1965-74 (not complete set). Also grass tree stickers if we would like them.

Suzie Zent and Anthony Amis (FOE) have asked our club to provide a letter of support

for a funding application for a koala mapping project in the Strzelecki region. This is to provide a more accurate map of the Gippsland koalas than the random sampling that has occurred to date. Phil has prepared and will send it.

Bushland Reserve AGMs – invitation from Jane Lloyd, Coordinator Environment Sustainability, Latrobe City Council to AGMs for Crinigan Rd, Edward Hunter and Ollerton Ave.

ANN meeting Saturday 1 December at Geelong to try to arrange a more sustainable future for the organization. Phil will attend.

## **Conservation Matters**

Ken Smith and Ken Harris ran a very successful nature study activity for some Commercial Rd Primary School students at Morwell NP.

## **GUEST SPEAKER FOR FEBRUARY**

**Margaret Rowe's** childhood interest in the marine life of the intertidal zone was re-kindled when, as a trainee teacher, she studied Zoology at the University of Melbourne. At the schools where she taught she established study of the invertebrates of the intertidal area and rockpooling excursions in the Science and Biology curricula. Knowledge of the common names, or sometimes even the general name for a group of similar animals, was sufficient for these tasks, and for the many additional rockpooling excursions she led over the years for a wide variety of age-groups and interest groups. The booklet, *Rockpooling Around the Bunurong*, was written in the early 1980s as part of the campaign for protection of the Bunurong coast, in an attempt to raise public awareness of the value of the intertidal area. This involved research into the habits and scientific names of animals commonly found along the rocky shores of the Bunurong. A long-time member of the Marine Research Group of the FNCV, retirement brought the opportunity for Margaret to participate in the fieldwork of that group. Fieldwork and surveys along the Victorian coastline, on rocky and muddy shores, brought the pleasure of seeing a much wider range of amazing and beautiful creatures and the challenge of learning their scientific names.

## **GUEST SPEAKER FOR MARCH**



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**Mike Cleeland**, a local geologist from Phillip Island, is a long-term member of the Inverloch Dinosaur Dig team. He is currently working as the Education Officer of Bunurong Environment Centre. He is also an accomplished bush poet and author of two booklets of bush poetry with an Australiana theme. His talk and excursion to Cape Liptrap will detail his involvement in the recent discovery of megafauna remains in Victoria.

## CLUB AGM 22 MARCH 2013

Positions vacant are President, VP1, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer.

## SEANA AUTUMN CAMP

Friday 15 to Sunday 17 March, at Merricks, hosted by Peninsula FNC.

Accommodation (Friday and Saturday nights) is at Merricks Lodge (UCA Camp), 3670 Frankston Flinders Rd Merricks 3916. There is plenty of room for camping (but no power). The Lodge has bunk beds, and all facilities are under the roofline. BYO linen, blankets, pillow, towel, etc. Also torch, name tag and alarm clock.

The camp will be fully catered for 3 course dinner (BYO alcohol and glasses) on Friday and Saturday nights, breakfast and takeaway lunch Saturday and Sunday.

Contact: Doris Weigert (03) 5979 3268

[www.home.vicnet.net.au/~penfnc](http://www.home.vicnet.net.au/~penfnc)

## SUMMER MEMBERS' NIGHT

There were five speakers for our members' night on 11 January 2013 with a diverse range of topics, and all very interesting. We do have a lot of talented people!

Estelle spoke about the Adams Family's trip to Alice Springs, Kununurra, Boulia, Mt Isa and lots more besides, enhanced by a display board of her always wonderful photos.

Ken Harris gave us a stunning picture show of some large moths.

David Mules showed us a sequence of super photos of the nest building efforts of a pair of Brown Gerygones last August/September. Such patience – his and the birds'!

Phil Rayment talked about the 2012 ANN Get-Together in Canberra accompanied by

lovely pictures of various excursion sites visited. A full report of the event will appear in future Naturalists.

President David told us about bird-watching in Cambodia, with lots of amazing shots of some fascinating birds, especially various cranes. Some of the birds were rare and hard to find – he did well!

## VALE NORA O'REILLY

Nora O'Reilly, who was a member of our club for many years, passed away on 5 January 2013 at the age of 95 years. Many will recall her friendship and also her various contributions to the club: she served as Treasurer from 1990 to 1996; in addition she hosted a number of Christmas parties at her home in Tanjil South and looked after supper provisioning at general meetings. Nora had a keen, down-to-earth interest in our natural environment and will be missed by many.

## FEBRUARY 2013 EXCURSION

On 23 February the club excursion will be at Ellen Lyndon Park in Leongatha, followed by rockpooling at Inverloch after lunch.

Proposed timetable:

12:00 Ellen Lyndon Park, Sth Gippsland Hwy (A440), opposite hospital. Guided walk then lunch. Toilets in town, none at the park.

1:00 Leave for Inverloch, various alternatives there.

2:15 Drive to rockpooling site, change shoes  
2.45 to 4.30 Beach geology and rockpooling

**NOTE** – Bring sun protection, hat etc, and suitable footwear. Shoes will get wet, so old sneakers, old shoes, or rubber boots are suitable, but bare feet, thongs and flimsy sandals are not safe.